



## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

October 18, 1999

### **H.R. 2961**

#### **International Patient Act of 1999**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on October 5, 1999*

Under the visa waiver pilot program administered by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), visitors from certain foreign countries may stay in the United States for up to 90 days without obtaining a visa; under limited circumstances, these visitors may stay an additional 120 days. H.R. 2961 would permit the INS to waive this restriction for visitors who need to stay longer to receive medical treatment and who meet certain other conditions. The bill's provisions would be limited to 300 individuals (and their families) each year and would be effective from January 1, 2000, through December 31, 2002. The INS would be required to prepare an annual report to the Congress regarding any waivers granted under the bill.

Enacting this bill would affect direct spending in fiscal years 2000 through 2003, but CBO estimates that the cost would not be significant in any single year. Because the bill would affect direct spending, pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. We estimate that the cost of administering the visa waiver pilot program, which is funded by immigration fees, would increase by less than \$100,000 a year as a result of enacting this bill. Although H.R. 2961 could affect spending for emergency Medicaid services, CBO expects that any such costs would not be significant because the bill would require individuals to show they have the means to pay for the medical treatment and their living expenses.

This legislation contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act, but it could have a very small effect on state, local, or tribal governments in the form of increases in emergency Medicaid spending.

The CBO staff contacts are Mark Grabowicz (for INS costs), Valerie Baxter (for effects on entitlement programs), and Lisa Cash Driskill (for the state and local impact). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.